GUEST COMMENTARY

Five reasons to keep military's ban on homosexuals

By **Melissa Wells-Petry**

President Clinton seems determined to lift the ban on homosexuals in the military, even if the resistance of Congress has forced him, for the moment, to delay his executive order by at least six months.

The media campaign in favor of lifting the ban has been relentless, of course, leaving the impression that no right-thinking person would challenge Clinton's position. Yet there are many points in favor of the ban. Here are a few of them.

First, homosexuals have not been singled out. The military excludes many categories of people from service: single parents, felons, the physically handicapped. The various services also "discriminate" on the basis of height and weight, physical and mental ability, visual acuity, language, youth and age.

Implicit in these exclusionary policies is the well-recognized legal principle that no one has a "right to serve." Military service at best is a privilege, at worst a dangerous burden. When the survival of the nation itself is at stake — and we must always assume that possibility — the overriding criterion for recruitment must be fitness to serve.

Second, despite the recent ruling in California that called the ban unconstitutional, federal courts have generally ruled that it does not violate civil rights. Contrary to the impression created by recent events, litigation over this policy has been extremely rare. What challenges there have been usually are based on familiar themes in contemporary civil rights law: the right to privacy, the right to free association, the right to free speech.

Anyone who reads the history of this litigation can only conclude that the California ruling will be overturned and that gay-rights activists will never gain access to the military through the federal courts, at least not by using classical civil-rights arguments.

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HERE WE GO AGAIN! NOW THE SAME NEANDERTHALS WHO OPPOSED INTEGRATING BLACKS IN THE ARMED SERVICES WANT TO BAN GAYS!
CLINTON FACES OPPOSITION
AHEM
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Third, the ban is justified, in part, by an abundance of evidence concerning the medical consequences of homosexual behavior. A 1990 American Medical Association report, for example, cited a study indicating that homosexual adolescents (many service enlistees fall into this group) were 23 times more likely to contract a sexually transmitted disease than were heterosexual adolescents. A 1986 study printed in the Journal of the American Medical Association noted that researchers found that hepatitis B infection occurred at rates of "40 percent to 60 percent among homosexual men, compared with 4 percent to 18 percent among heterosexual men."

Even if recent changes in sexual behavior have altered the precise numbers, it remains true that the military services are not equipped to deal with medical crises of such proportions. For one thing, the services have neither the financial resources nor the personnel to do so. For another, a combat unit must be fit for battle at all times. If a soldier is on sick call, then someone else must stand his watch, fly his aircraft, or take his place in the foxhole. Lives are inevitably endangered as a result, to say nothing of the nation's defenses.

Fourth, merely to forbid on-duty homosexual conduct will not deter it. A large body of evidence indicates that over the years homosexual service members have continued to engage in sexual behavior even at the risk of criminal prosecution. Those who want to make a distinction between "on-duty behavior" and "off-duty behavior" fail to realize the unique legal status of service members, who are in many ways always on-duty.

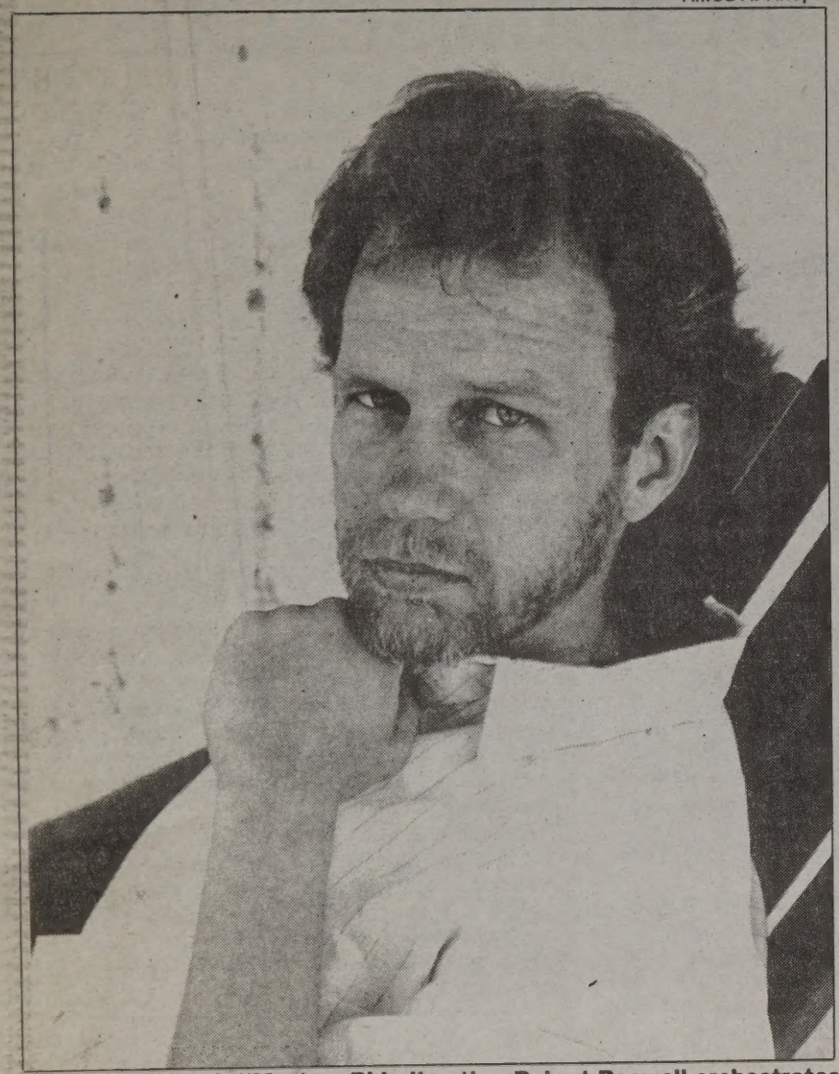
Fifth, the military must maintain a sense of trust and mutual reliance in an environment that is often confined and stressful. Service members live together, shower together, sleep in cramped quarters together, and — in an emergency — share blood with one another. There is no way that such arrangements would not be severely compromised by the presence of homosexuals. There is no way that service morale would not deteriorate as a result.

These are the hard facts of military life. They cannot be altered by trendy rhetoric or grand abstractions. They are the absolutes upon which military policy must rest. We should not reverse a sound policy because we fail to understand — or fail to remember — the unique mission of our armed forces.

Maj. Wells-Petry is the author of the book "Exclusion: Homosexuals and the Right to Serve" (Regnery Gateway), due out in May. Her article is reprinted with permission of The Wall Street Journal © 1992 Dow Jones & Company Inc. All rights reserved.

BOOKS

Alfred A. Knopf



In his latest novel, "Mystery Ride," author Robert Boswell orchestrates an ensemble piece, creating such vital characters that one forgets they're not flesh and blood.

BEST SELLERS

Here are the best sellers for the week ending Feb. 5, compiled from data from independent and chain bookstores, book wholesalers and independent distributors nationwide.

HARDCOVER

FICTION

1. **"The Bridges of Madison County,"** Robert James Waller. Warner, $14.95
2. **"Dragon Tears,"** Dean Koontz. Putnam, $22.95
3. **"Degree of Guilt,"** Richard North Patterson. Knopf, $23
4. **"Devil's Waltz,"** Jonathan Kellerman. Bantam, $22.95
5. **"Along Came a Spider,"** James Patterson. Little, Brown, $21.95
6. **"Close Combat,"** W.E.B. Griffin. Putnam, $22.95
7. **"The Pelican Brief,"** John Grisham. Doubleday, $22.50
8. **"Griffin & Sabine,"** Nick Bantock. Chronicle Books, $17.95
9. **"The General's Daughter,"** Nelson DeMille. Warner, $21.95
10. **"Waiting to Exhale,"** Terry McMillan. Viking, $22

NON-FICTION

1. **"The Way Things Ought to Be,"** Rush Limbaugh. Pocket Books, $22
2. **"Women Who Run with the Wolves,"** Clarissa Pinkola Estes. Ballantine, $20
3. **"Bankruptcy 1995,"** Harry E. Figgie. Little, Brown, $19.95
4. **"Excess Baggage,"** Judith Sills. Viking, $21
5. **"Healing and the Mind,"** Bill Moyers. Doubleday, $25
6. **"Harvey Penick's Little**

ISSUES

Drugs/Companies earn big returns on their dollar

From D1

developed with federal funds."

This may come as a shock, but it shouldn't. Americans routinely pay more for drugs than anyone else in the world.

By the three most important measures of profitability — return on equity, return on sales and return on assets — the drug industry has ranked at or near the top year after year.

While the rest of industry in the United States was experiencing a sharp decline in profits, many pharmaceutical companies were posting earnings 15 percent to 20 percent more than the previous year.

Among the Fortune 500 drug companies, the median return on equity was 26 percent — that is, every dollar invested was making 26 cents profit. That was twice the median for all Fortune 500 industries.

Fueling those profits: Prescription drug prices have shot up 147 percent in the past decade, a period during which prices overall rose 50 percent.

The effect of higher prices is being felt by all Americans, but particularly hard hit are many older people on Medicare, which doesn't cover pr

you discourage initiative, why should people (investors) take the risk?"

It is true that any given research project entails considerable risk, with the likelihood of failure far outweighing the likelihood of success. But the overall strategy of a company, including the research effort, is designed in such a way that the risks to investors are kept to a minimum.

For example, many big companies spread their research risk by developing variations of successful drugs already on the market — so-called me-too drugs. That is less of a gamble than trying to find a breakthrough drug — a major advance in treatment.

Most companies won't get involved in a research project if they don't think it will pay off in 10 years, industry researchers say.

Drug industry defends prices

Drug company executives don't talk much about how they arrive at the price of a drug.

"Pharmaceutical prices are hard to understand because people look at a tablet or a capsule and say, 'It can't be more than 4 or 5 cents worth of ingredient in

Senator seen as thorn in side of industry

Arkansas Democrat pushing for change

By **Marian Uhlman**
Knight-Ridder Newspapers

WASHINGTON — Sen. David Pryor once was little more than a gnat at a picnic for pharmaceutical executives.

Now, he's the guy who has President Clinton's ear. He's the guy who will be in the midst of any health care reform involving prescription drugs. He's the guy who has become a nightmare for the drug industry.

To see why, look no further than the report his Senate Special Committee on Aging released Wednesday. It concluded that drug company promises to keep price increases in line with overall inflation are not what they appeared to be — a point drug companies strongly dispute with their own figures, based on different calculations.

Voluntary price restraint has been a key strategy for a number of big pharmaceutical companies as they try to quell criticism over years of high drug-price inflation, thereby attempting to fend off govern-